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RECENT TENDENCIES IN THE NORTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES¹

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Though I do not know that the Baptist denomination has ever formally chosen as its motto the words of Peter in Acts, "We ought to obey God rather than men," there are perhaps none that more perfectly express its genius and spirit than these. It is by no means affirmed that Baptists have in fact been more loyal to God than other Christians, but that the impulses that gave rise to the denomination and its subsequent history have created among them a habitual attitude of mind which is well expressed in the words of the apostle.

Implicit in this recognition of divine authority as over against any human will, civil or ecclesiastical, yet also often explicitly affirmed, is the recognition of the value and dignity of the human personality. Whether we consciously derived it from Jesus and traced it back to him, or unconsciously absorbed it from our reading

¹ Though the Baptist churches of the northern and southern states of the United States are the products of the same original historical movement, they have now for three quarters of a century employed for the most part different agencies for the prosecution of their missionary work and for the expression of their opinions. Partly as a consequence of this fact, they have developed somewhat different tendencies, both of thought and of action. The present article deals only with the churches now associated together in the Northern Baptist Convention.

of the New Testament, we have in fact always believed that a human person was supremely valuable and ought not to be enslaved to another's will or made a means to an impersonal end.

This twofold attitude has found expression in: (1) A refusal to submit either our religious lives as individuals, or the corporate action of our local churches, or the enterprises of the denomination, to the control of the civil authority. (2) A refusal to recognize any ecclesiastical authority over the individual or the churches, either coming from without the denomination or created within it. We recognize no pope or bishop, Roman Catholic or Episcopalian; we create none for ourselves. (3) An insistence upon the independence of the local church. As churches we co-operate one with another and accept advice from the larger bodies which we create for purposes of co-operation, but we do not surrender our autonomy to convention or association. (4) Steadfast maintenance of the right of the individual to a direct relation to God without the intervention of priest or ceremony. We may recommend, we may even insist upon, baptism and the Lord's Supper, but we regard these as expressions of personal religion and helps to the development of it, not as efficient and essential causes of it. (5) The limitation of church membership to those who profess, and are believed to exercise, personal faith; this carries with it the rejection of inherited membership in the church and of infant baptism. (6) A reluctance to adopt a creed either for the denomination or for the local church. There are indeed current among us certain confessions of faith which have been extensively used, but these are not themselves uniform in doctrine, and standing in the denomination is not dependent upon the adoption of any one of them. The Northern Baptist Convention has by-laws, but no creed, unless indeed the "Declaration" of the Convention that it believes in the independence of the local church be a creed. (7) Reluctance to create or employ church courts. A state convention or an association may exclude from its membership a church which it regards as heretical or obstreperous. A council may recommend that a minister who has been guilty of immoral conduct be deposed from the ministry, and a church may exclude him, but trials for heresy are extremely rare among us.

In these things we are practically all agreed, and in respect to them there has been little change in the denomination for a hundred years. But there are certain other things in which we are not now wholly agreed, and probably not as nearly so as we were a generation or a century ago. Interestingly enough, the differences which have arisen have sprung to a very considerable extent from the same great ideas which have been the basis of our unity, the conviction that we ought to obey God rather than men, and our recognition of the value of human personalities. It will contribute to a clear presentation of the changes which have taken place if I first state certain positions which the denomination generally held a generation or so ago.

1. *The Bible*.—Once practically all of us added to our fundamental principle of obedience to God an acceptance of the further proposition that the Bible is the Word of God, inspired, authoritative, inerrant. Thirty years ago it was a common maxim among us that “the Bible is the sole rule of faith and conduct.” In practice this meant not only that the doctrinal statements of all parts of the Bible were true, and its commands binding on our consciences, but that the precedents, of the New Testament at least, were to be followed.

2. *Baptism*.—Adding to this the further proposition that the word “to baptize” as used in the New Testament means “to immerse,” and that the early church practiced immersion only, we accepted this practice as binding on us, and emphatically rejected both infant baptism and sprinkling or pouring as substitutes for immersion in the confession of Christian faith.

3. *The Lord's Supper*.—Discovering in the New Testament what we regarded as conclusive evidence that in the early church only those who had been baptized participated in the Lord's Supper, we practiced close communion and invited to participation in the Lord's Supper as we celebrated it only “members of sister churches of like faith and order with ourselves.” Most Baptist churches of forty years ago in the northern states held firmly to this opinion and practice, though there were doubtless not a few among us who silently dissented from the opinion of the majority.

4. *Christology*.—In common with other so-called evangelical churches we held to the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

5. *The coming of the Lord*.—Discovering also in the New Testament evidence that the early church believed that Jesus would return to earth on the clouds of heaven to raise the dead and judge the world, we made this expectation a part of our own Christian faith. Finding in the Book of Revelation a promise that those who have part in the first resurrection shall reign with Christ a thousand years, after which Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, we disputed whether the coming of the Lord would be at the beginning or the end of the thousand years, but we did not doubt that he would come again bodily and visibly, according to the promise of Acts 1:11.

6. *Method of interpretation*.—Partly as the cause, partly as the effect, of all these things, a great many of us were almost as thoroughly literalistic in our interpretation and legalistic in our conception of religion and morals as were the Pharisees of Jesus' day. We had a larger Bible than they, and a consequently more difficult problem of adjustment of part to part. But we bravely held our faith that all parts of the Scriptures could be harmonized, and settled all questions of doctrine and of practice by an appeal to "Thus saith the scriptures."

But we were in fact never quite consistent in the matter. We kept the Old Testament command to observe the Sabbath, but we never practiced circumcision: we followed the Old Testament in preference to Jesus in respect to the former; we followed Paul in preference to the Old Testament in respect to the latter. We practiced immersion, but not footwashing. Only here and there did we forbid women to speak in the churches. Our fundamental principle of obedience to God and recognition of the right of the individual conscience prevailed at this point over our second principle that the Bible was the Word of God and that its commands ought to be obeyed and its precedents followed. The impulse of the Spirit in the hearts of living Christians carried a stronger imperative than the inspired words of the apostles.

It was not unnatural, therefore, that as we came into a closer contact with our fellow-Christians of other denominations and learned to recognize in them a type of Christian character quite as high as anything that we ourselves possessed, the question should be raised whether we really had a sound basis for our attitude toward other churches, especially in the matter of close communion. Something like fifty years ago a few eminent ministers of the denomination left it rather than submit to the criticism to which they were subjected for abandoning the previous practice of our churches in the matter of close communion. The leaven which they left behind went on working quietly with little discussion and few if any church trials or acts of discipline. Today open communion is tolerated without protest throughout the northern churches, and is probably the actual if not the avowed practice of four-fifths of the churches in the territory of the Northern Baptist Convention.

When again the progress of biblical study, for which we were ourselves only in small part responsible, brought to the front the question whether the Bible really was inerrant in history, science, and morals, whether in fact it contained a body of self-consistent opinions or did not rather represent a stream of changing thought, our fundamental principle that we ought to obey God rather than men reinforced the influences impelling us to look into these matters. There grew among us a feeling that our clear duty to obey God carried with it an equally clear duty to inquire honestly and without fear how God's thoughts were revealed in the Scriptures. We asked ourselves whether we could in fact appeal to brief texts here and there throughout the Bible and find in each of them a *verbum dei*, or whether it was incumbent upon us here as in other realms of knowledge to ascertain if possible just what the facts were and what was the bearing of these facts upon the doctrine, which we had previously accepted, of a Bible inerrant and authoritative in all parts. The result was to convince many among us, not that the Bible was less valuable than we supposed, but that it was far more interesting and demanded a far more thoroughgoing study than we had given to it, and that from the

moving stream of historic event and thought which it disclosed to such thorough study, we must judge, first what the prophets and writers of ancient times believed and taught, and then in the light of these records of thought, and in the light of all history as known to us, judge what we ought to believe and practice in our day. The result of this process, which has been going on for a generation, has been the widespread adoption of the historical point of view and method of study.

From this and other causes it has come to pass that opinions of which there were scarcely any representatives a generation ago are now not uncommon among us.

Some of us are not as sure as we once were that baptism, by immersion or otherwise, is essential to membership in the church. To a very limited extent, and on the part of very few, this doubt is associated with a question whether the great commission in Matt. 28:20 has come down to us in the words of Jesus, or is not rather, in form at least, the expression of the practice and convictions of the early apostolic church. But to a far greater extent it springs from the positive conviction, based on a study of the New Testament, that the religion of Jesus, the religion of the New Testament, is essentially spiritual in character and cannot include as essential elements any outward ordinance. This conviction rests of course upon the judgment that to ascertain what the thought of Jesus or Paul was, one must rely not upon sentences detached from their context, or indeed upon single sentences taken in their context, but upon the interpretation of the total evidence. Here too our old Baptist feeling that we ought to obey God rather than men comes in to reinforce our new point of view. It reminds us that true loyalty to God shrinks from no necessary effort to ascertain the real mind of God. It suggests that as in the course of a generation or more we have come to look upon the Lord's Supper rather as one of the privileges of a Christian than as a duty to be enforced by the authority and under the scrutiny of the church, so also we should be more in conformity with the will of God if we should put baptism among these privileges. We are led to inquire whether to insist that a man about whose genuine faith we have no doubt shall express that faith in one particular form rather than in

another which to his conscience is better, is not dangerously near to demanding that he shall obey man rather than God, or else is affirming, in a sense which the facts do not warrant, that every sentence of the New Testament is a word of God, and that through all the centuries since it was written there has been no disclosure of the divine will which could by any possibility supersede such a sentence of the New Testament, or set it in a new light.

A few churches among us have already taken the step of welcoming to their membership all who give credible evidence of faith in Jesus Christ and the acceptance of his ideals of life. They indeed recommend that such persons profess this faith by baptism in the form always practiced among us, but do not impose it as a condition of membership. A much larger number have adopted some halfway plan, receiving to associate membership, or membership in the society as distinguished from the church, those Christians who desire to share in the religious life of the church but feel no duty to be immersed. Should any considerable number of our churches adopt the first of these two plans, the result might be in the course of another generation that as a denomination we should stand in reference to baptism where we already stand in reference to communion.

The adoption of the historical point of view has raised in not a few minds a question less obvious, but not less far-reaching in its significance, than that of baptism. We had refused to vest authority in the field of religion in the state or the pope or the church. We had said it was in God, and then we had accepted the Bible as the chief—sometimes we had said the only—expression of God's will in the field of religion and morals. But coming to the study of the Scriptures with a desire to discover both how they came into existence and what were their actual characteristics, some among us have been constrained to admit that the books are not infallible in history or in matters of science, and not wholly consistent, and therefore not ultimately and as a whole inerrant in the field of morals and religion. Many of us freely admit that the apostle Paul expected the visible return of the Lord on the clouds of heaven in the then near future, but do not feel obliged or authorized still to cherish in our day that hope which history

has proved he mistakenly held in his. Seeking then a substitute for the authoritative Scriptures, many of us have found it in the authority and lordship of the Christ, the supreme and final revelation of God. Yet the acceptance of this position has not altogether put a stop to further thinking on the subject. It still remains to ask whether the lordship of Jesus is expressed for us in a certain definite body of commands which we ought to obey in that same spirit of legalistic loyalty in which the Pharisees of Jesus' day endeavored to keep the Old Testament; or whether on the other hand Jesus was a teacher of great principles, which it is incumbent upon us to apply to the multitudinous phases and experiences of life, and the embodiment of an ideal, which it is ours to endeavor as best we can to achieve. Probably most of those among us who no longer hold that the Scriptures are the sole rule of faith and practice are governing our thinking and to a large extent our lives by a recognition of the lordship of Jesus in one or the other of the two forms just spoken of. Yet some perhaps have been constrained to press on to the further inquiry as to what is the ultimate basis of authority in religion, and what is the criterion by which we recognize it. How did Jesus decide that this or that was right and true, and what is our ultimate reason for accepting his judgments on these subjects? These questions are, however, but little mooted among us, and belong rather in the realm of the scholar's study than in that of the practical religious life.

Similarly belonging to the study rather than to the pulpit or the parish is the fact that some who have come to recognize the vast difference between the philosophy of the fourth century in whose terminology the Nicene Creed was stated, and that of our own day, have learned to think of the deity of Christ as meaning that he is the supreme revelation of God in human life, rather than a proposition to be metaphysically understood. This has of course in turn affected somewhat their interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

A more obvious change, one of which any intelligent observer must be aware, has come about in our attitude toward other denominations in other matters than that of communion, and especially in respect to co-operation with them. Brought by a

variety of causes into closer contact with our fellow-Christians than was common a generation ago, we are no longer as sure as we once were that we are wholly right and they are wholly wrong, and there are fewer among us than there were a generation ago who believe that the Baptist church is the only true church, and that all the other so-called churches are societies but imperfectly realizing the ideal of the church. Our zeal for proselyting Presbyterians and Methodists has notably diminished, and we are far more ready to co-operate with them than formerly. While making certain reservations, which indeed were dictated by the more conservative among us, but which in practice have proved less harmful than some of us at the outset feared they would be, we yet were among the first to give our adherence to the Interchurch World Movement. There have been few more enthusiastic advocates of the principles of that movement than some of our own ministers and laymen, notably the latter.

On the matter of organic union there is doubtless a wide diversity of opinion among us. Some there are who, believing in the divine authority of the congregational church order and of baptism of believers by immersion, cannot in fidelity to their own convictions favor organic union on any other basis than the acceptance of these fundamental principles. Others there are who, seeing these things not as authoritative divine commands but at the most as things which are desirable to maintain because of their contribution to religious life, look eagerly for the day when all Protestant churches at least shall be united in one inclusive Christian church. Between these two extremes there are not a few who, essentially in sympathy with the second class, are yet so impressed with the necessity of maintaining freedom of religious life and thought and with the extreme difficulty of maintaining these in an organization which should bring together Christians of as widely diverging opinions, tastes, and practices as are those of the Protestant churches of today, that they have little practical interest in the promotion of organic union. They believe that more can be accomplished by efforts within the several denominations looking toward greater tolerance and sympathy with other Christians, and by co-operation in the promotion of the ideals of Christianity,

without attempts at organic union, than by such efforts coupled with a program for organic union. It was essentially this last, mediating, position which found expression in the resolutions adopted at the meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention at Denver in 1919, though to some who desired a declaration in favor of organic union they seemed like an affirmation of the first position.

But not only are there among us a considerable number who look with greater toleration upon other denominations than did their fathers, but the study of other religions, prosecuted in connection with missionary work and in our schools, has led many of us to a recognition of elements of value in those religions, and has compelled us to abandon the classification which recognizes one true religion, Christianity, and ranks all others among the false. Indeed some among us have been led to adopt and to apply even to Christianity the thesis that religion, like all other phenomena of human experience, is the product of an evolutionary process. Each generation is both the heir of its religious ancestry and the maker of its own religion. Those who hold this view would not deny the supremacy of the revelation that God made through the Hebrew race and pre-eminently through Jesus, but would affirm the larger faith that in all parts of his world and in all ages God speaks in the hearts of men and works on essentially the same principles. Though doubtless influenced in the adoption of it by the currents of modern thought, they yet believe that they find the basis of their faith even in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and that they are but following in the footsteps of those men of old who for an older and a narrower idea of God accepted a larger and truer conception of him.

It might be supposed that in so far as these latter views prevail, they are accompanied by a loss of interest in the work of extending Christianity throughout the world. A generation ago Joseph Cook and others of his type of thought used to say that any doubt about the future perdition of all who had not received the gospel, would "cut the nerve of missions." Were these men still living and holding to the same point of view, they would doubtless say this with even greater emphasis of those who hold such views as have just

been referred to. But like many other men of fear these also have proved false prophets. The doctrine of future punishment has fallen into the background, and the Wellingtonian argument for missions, as well as the argument from the eternal perdition of the unevangelized heathen, is rarely heard. But not only among those who hold to the older views, possibly even more among those who have departed in the directions indicated from the thought of our fathers, is the interest in the extension of Christianity throughout the world deeper than ever before, expressing itself alike in gifts of money and in the consecration of lives. It would lie beyond the limited scope of this paper to attempt to point out the main causes which have contributed to this, but one of them is undoubtedly to be found in a broadening of the conception of the purpose for which missions to non-Christian peoples are carried on.

Along with this deepening of interest in the missionary work of the church, and the change in the conception of its purpose, has gone the adoption of a somewhat different policy from that which was followed fifty years ago in reference to the qualifications for missionary service. Availing themselves of the results of the struggle through which our Congregational brethren passed in the ninth decade of the last century, our own denomination has accepted substantially the principles at which they arrived with respect to the basis for appointment to missionary service. For many years the Board of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society has followed the principle that the ordination of a man by a duly constituted council settles the question of his orthodoxy, and that the Board has no mandate from the denomination to go behind the council and inquire into his theological views. The result of this policy, and of the changes of theological thought that have been going on in the denomination at home, is that our missionaries represent in themselves practically the same varieties of opinion and point of view that prevail at home. We share also a transfer of emphasis, which is common to most Protestant denominations, from the effort to rescue individual souls from perdition to the endeavor to create Christian communities enjoying all the benefits of the religion of Jesus and permeated by his spirit. Seeking to exemplify that spirit in the effort to create such communities,

we have no longer an exclusive or preponderant interest in evangelistic work in the strict sense of that term, but found hospitals, maintain schools, conduct industrial work, and seek in all possible ways in the spirit of our Master to develop communities that exemplify the highest type of Christian life.

Somewhat parallel to these changes that have taken place in our work abroad, are changes in our methods at home. The old type of evangelism which was represented by Elder Swan and Elder Knapp and other scarcely less famous men of fifty or sixty years ago, has largely passed away. In many of our churches the emphasis is laid today on religious education, and on methods and influences under which the young are led to adopt the principles of Jesus and to accept his leadership quietly and gradually, though no less effectively and finally. But if this older type of evangelism is gone, evangelism is not. Many of our best preachers count evangelistic preaching to be their greatest task, as it is also their highest joy, and our Home Mission Society has lately created a department of evangelism with a special officer in charge of it, and is vigorously promoting evangelistic work, albeit of a more quiet and less emotional type than that which was common fifty years ago.

In common with other denominations and in no material respect differently from them, we are awaking to the importance of the application of the principles of Jesus to all phases of human life, not least to those which have to do with industry. We are unable to shut our eyes to the fact that Jesus found the chief value of the world in men, women, and children. Recognizing this, we are compelled also as his disciples to share his interest and take his point of view. We are by no means agreed as yet among ourselves as to what changes in the organization of society or the conduct of business the application of his principles and spirit will carry with them. Perhaps some of us are unconsciously resisting the tendency to apply the religion of Jesus to our common life and to our own business. But certainly our eyes are being opened and the tide of interest in these matters is a rising one. It is a fact that seems to some of us of no little significance, that it is precisely among some of our members who have the greatest wealth that there is the keenest interest in this aspect of our religion and the

strongest desire in this as in other things to follow the teaching of Jesus.

It is implicit in several of the statements made above that to a considerable extent we have transferred the emphasis of our thought as a denomination from orthodoxy of doctrine to Christ-likeness of life, and from the salvation of the individual, with emphasis upon rescue from future woe, to the creation of a human society dominated by the spirit of Jesus.

But if these statements have given the impression that the new opinions and attitudes are characteristic of the denomination as a whole, that impression should be at once corrected. On the contrary, while some have been adopting the newer type of thought, there are many who stand firmly for the doctrines and practices of the fathers of forty years ago. A considerable part of our denomination, though probably in fact only a small minority, expects the early bodily return of Christ, while a still larger part, probably a majority, believes in the infallible Bible, the blood atonement, and the deity of Christ in the metaphysical sense.

Indeed there are some among us who, holding these or similar views, regard the maintenance of them as so important to the life of the church that they desire the Northern Baptist Convention to adopt a creed and to remand into the position of dissenters and heretics all who do not assent to it. To some, especially of those who recall the past history of the denomination, this demand itself seems a most serious heresy and its acceptance the most radical and reactionary step that the denomination could take. Between the two extremes there are so many intermediate positions that it is impossible to enumerate them.

It might seem, therefore, as if in their total effect the changes of the last forty or fifty years have been divisive and centrifugal. Some indeed might conclude that a denomination in which there are such differences of opinion and tendency could not long hold together. There is, however, another side of the matter, not less important to take into account than that which has been presented above.

As already pointed out, the local church is the supreme authority in the Baptist denomination. Associations and conventions are

voluntary groups of local churches, as local churches are voluntary associations of Christians. Our so-called national societies have arisen in practically every case as voluntary associations of individuals interested in a particular type of religious activity. But these voluntary associations always appealed to as large a portion of the total constituency of our churches as they were able to reach. Their position was in a sense illogical. They were not created by the denomination as such; they were not controlled by it; but they continually appealed to it for support. It is now about fifteen years since the sense of dissatisfaction with this rather anomalous situation and the desire for the development of a real denominational consciousness and activity, found vocal expression in the proposal for a Northern Baptist Convention. This Convention came into existence at Oklahoma City in 1908. True, however, to our democratic principles this Convention was given no authority over churches, associations, state conventions, or societies. Its powers were advisory, and its function the creation of denominational consciousness and conviction.

Ten years of experience under this organization brought about a much larger measure of co-operation than had previously existed among our national societies, but also created the conviction that for the greatest effectiveness in the accomplishment of our common task actual unity of effort must take the place of the co-operation which was often laboriously secured and maintained. Even more important, out of the denominational consciousness which had by this time been created, there sprang also a desire to see with greater clearness than ever before the whole of our task as a denomination.

The Northern Baptist Convention at its session at Atlantic City in May, 1918, requested the National Committee of Northern Baptist Laymen, a temporary organization which had arisen under the influence of the ideals of which we have been speaking, to make a study of the work of the denomination with a view to discovering better methods of financial co-operation between the Convention and the bodies co-operating with it. In obedience to these instructions, the Laymen's Committee appointed a special committee with instructions to present to the Convention at its

next annual meeting a survey of the whole work and task of the denomination. This committee, made up of representative men and women from various parts of the territory of the Convention, after months of arduous labor presented their report at Denver in 1919. The impression made by it, both then and afterward, was profound and far-reaching. The immediate result was that the Convention voted to undertake to raise for the work of the denomination the sum of \$100,000,000 in the next five years. The same Convention adopted also the recommendation of another committee creating a General Board of Promotion, to which was assigned the task of disseminating information throughout the denomination concerning all the work of the Convention and of its affiliating and co-operating organizations, and of devising and promoting means of raising the money for these organizations. The tremendous task thus thrown upon the new organization has already been in large measure achieved.

The whole matter is referred to, however, at this point, not to announce the success of the financial effort, but for the purpose of pointing out that while the process of diversification of opinion has gone steadily on, co-operation in the practical religious tasks of the denomination and a growing perception of the magnitude of its task has been a powerful unifying force. Men whose theological views are far apart, and who are perfectly aware of this fact, not only work shoulder to shoulder in every organization of the denomination but loyally trust one another and cherish for one another a strong friendship and deep affection. This is of course not true of all the men who hold divers opinions. Some suspicion and some bitterness there has been, but there has been far more co-operation and friendship between men of differing views, and participation in a common task and fellowship in work has been a great unifying force.

What then is the outlook for the future?

Thus far the writer has endeavored to speak in the spirit of the historian, reporting what he has observed, though of course not wholly escaping the influence of the personal equation. The rôle of the prophet is a difficult one, yet some things are fairly clear.

There is no sign that as a whole we shall abandon our fundamental principle of obeying God rather than men, or that we shall give up that independence of the local church or that recognition of the right of the individual to his own personal relation to God which has been characteristic of us throughout our history.

There is no sign that we shall ever come to uniformity of belief. We differ widely on many questions and shall probably continue to do so.

Emphasis on a physical rite will not much longer suffice to hold us together. There is too large a minority who are convinced that the religion of Jesus is essentially a spiritual religion, and to whom loyalty to the fundamental principles of Jesus' religion seems to forbid insistence upon any physical ceremony as a condition of church fellowship, to make it probable that we shall much longer be known as Baptists because we insist on immersion.

Mere emphasis on freedom will not hold us together. There is not sufficient centripetal power in the agreement to disagree to make this alone an adequate cohesive force.

So far negatives, and though negatives may be in a measure regulative, they are not constructive. But there are certain positive elements of a possible denominational program which are not foreign to the Baptist denomination and which, duly emphasized, would give to it a large importance and a definite task in the family of Protestant denominations. The conclusion of this article shall be an attempt to state these.

1. Steadfast insistence on the necessity of personal spiritual religion as over against all formalism, sacerdotalism, and ascription of saving power to church or rite.

2. Continued assertion and practice of the doctrines of soul liberty and right of the individual to think his own thoughts and live his own life responsible directly to God and uncontrolled by doctrine or church or rite, qualified only by the duty of government to restrain individuals from harming others and of the church to disfellowship the unmoral or unruly.

3. Continued emphasis upon evangelism and religious education, not as rivals but as complementary aspects of the same task, if not indeed different names for the same thing.

4. Continued diligence in the study of the Bible, the history of religion, and the condition of the world, with a view to discovering with increasing clearness and completeness the thought and will of God and our own present duty.

5. Education of our whole membership to the acceptance of the spirit of Jesus as the controlling force of their lives, with the devotion of themselves and their business to the permeation of human society by that spirit. A corollary of this attitude would be the devotion of large numbers of our young people to lives of missionary and social service, and the recognition of the rest that, though their occupations may be in a sense secular, their lives must be, equally with those of these others, devoted to the welfare of humanity and the fulfilment of the ideals of Jesus.

6. Development of our educational institutions to the highest practicable efficiency, permeation of them with the highest religious ideals, and the encouragement of our young to seek the largest practicable training to the end that they may be fitted to render the largest service.

7. Frank and intelligent acceptance of Jesus' estimate of the value of men as compared with any or all material things, historic institutions, or statutes, and the inclusion of human welfare in all its aspects, intellectual and religious, physical and industrial, as within the scope of the church's concern; and the adoption of definite and intelligent plans for doing our share in making the world a Christian home for the human race.

8. Continued practice of the ancient and beautiful rite of baptism, but with toleration of the view that it is not a duty to be enforced by the church as a condition of membership, but a privilege to be, like the Lord's Supper, recommended to all who seek membership in the church. This would not signify the adoption of infant baptism even as an alternative to the baptism of believers. It would mean the whole-hearted acceptance, or at least the toleration, of the principle that physical causes do not produce spiritual results, and that neither the Christian life nor membership in the church of Christ is conditioned on any outward rite or physical fact, but solely upon the spiritual qualities of faith and love.

9. Continued loyalty to our own convictions forbidding us to merge ourselves in other bodies when such merging would carry with it as a consequence the loss of our ability to stand for the vision that God has given us; yet an equally loyal recognition of the working of the Spirit in other Christian bodies, leading us to seek friendly co-operation with all other Christians in so far as similarity of aim and plans of work make such co-operation conducive to the progress of God's kingdom on earth, and to stand ready to unite with other denominations whenever it shall be reasonably clear that such union will deepen the spiritual life and increase the effectiveness of the bodies uniting.

There are indeed among us some who would not accept all parts of this platform. They believe that for the conservation of its life the denomination must forsake its historic attitude and adopt a creedal basis, and view with hesitation, if not with alarm, any suggestion of co-operation with other denominations which might eventually lead to changes in denominational boundaries. It is the profound conviction of others of us that if as a denomination we should put the emphasis of our thought and practice upon the matters above enumerated we should be moving in the direction of our normal development, should have a mission and reason for existence which would suffice for the immediate future, and that we could well afford to leave the further development of the denomination to the divinely guided future to determine.